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LETTERS FROM A TEACHER TO HER YOUNG FEMALE FRIEND, JUST ABOUT COMMENCING TO KEEP SCHOOL.

No. XI.

My dear L——: Having a distinct view of the mountain-ranges of the earth, and the extent and direction of the great valleys, the next general survey we are to take is, of the basins of lakes and rivers. Mountains are the natural barriers that separate countries from each other, lakes and rivers the natural mediums of communication; and we shall see how the prosperity of large countries is facilitated by such means.

The basin of a river does not mean merely the water surface, but includes the whole area of land drained by it, and by its tributaries. The area of the St. Lawrence basin, exclusive of the lakes, is 439,000 square miles, the total water surface 72,930, making an aggregate of 511,930 square miles. This is the lowest estimate. This basin contains more than half the fresh water on this planet; according to Darby's calculation, the mass would "form a cubic column of nearly 22 miles, each side; or, if spread round the earth equally on each side of the equator, at a depth of one foot, it would nearly cover the torrid zone, and would actually envelop the whole earth to a depth of more than three inches." Lakes Superior, Michigan, and Huron, are the deepest chasms on the continental face of the earth; Lake Superior is the largest inland sea, except the Caspian which covers an area of 124,000 miles, but is comparatively shallow. Lake Superior covers an area of 24,000 square miles, its mean depth is 900 feet, its water level 641 feet above that of the Atlantic, and its outer margin 600 feet above the level of the lake itself. 23 feet below the level of Lake Superior lie Lakes Michigan and Huron, the former 15,000, the latter 19,000 square miles in area, each 900 feet in depth, and 618 above the Atlantic level, their bottoms 300 feet *below*. 52½ feet below the level of Michigan and Huron, lies Lake Erie, occupying an area of 8030 square miles, only 120 feet in depth, and 565 above the Atlantic level. The surface of Lake Ontario is 334 feet below that of Erie, by actual measurement. Its area is 5400 square miles, its depth 492 feet, its elevation above the Atlantic 231 feet. "A phenomenon which distinguishes Lake Ontario," says Darby, "is the convincing evidence of an abatement of its surface, afforded by its alluvial shores. Such evidence exists around each of the other great lakes in the St. Lawrence basin; but in no other instance so strongly marked as along

the margin of Ontario. This evidence goes far beyond the ordinary appearance of either ancient or recent alluvial deposits." The following description I quote from the writings of De Witt Clinton: —

"From near the Genesee River to Lewistown, on the Niagara River, there is a remarkable ridge, or elevation of land, running almost the whole distance which is 80 miles, and in a direction from east to west. Its general altitude above the neighboring land is 30 feet, and its width varies considerably; in some places it is not more than 40 yards wide. *Its elevation above the level of Lake Ontario, is, perhaps,* 160 *feet,* to which it descends by a gradual slope, and its distance from the water is between six and ten miles. There is every reason to believe that this remarkable ridge was the ancient boundary of this great lake. The gravel with which it is covered was deposited there by the waters, and the stones every where indicate, by their shape, the abrasion and agitation produced by that element. All along the borders of the western rivers and lakes, there are small mounds, or heaps of gravel, of a conical form, erected by the fish for the protection of their spawn. These fish-banks are found at the foot of the ridge, on the side towards the lake; on the opposite side none have been discovered. All rivers and streams which enter the lake from the south, have their mouths affected with sand in a peculiar way, from the prevalence and power of the north-westerly winds. The points of the creeks which pass through the ridge correspond exactly in appearance with the entrance of the streams into the lake. These facts evince, beyond doubt, that Lake Ontario has receded from this elevated ground; and the cause of this retreat must be ascribed to its having enlarged its former outlets, or to its imprisoned waters, (aided, probably, by an earthquake,) forcing a passage down the present bed of the St. Lawrence."

Darby confirms this view by observations of his own. If the view is correct, Lake Ontario formerly stood 160 feet above its present surface, and the Falls of Niagara did not exist. (The perpendicular height of the falls has been ascertained by measurement to be 158 feet 4 inches.) "When standing on the shelving rocks above the two opposite towns of Queenstown and Lewistown, it is demonstrated to the eye," says Darby, "that here once dashed Niagara, mingling his foaming surge with the waves of Ontario. The rocky bed has yielded to the ever-rolling waters, and the cataract has retired to the deep and distant dell, where it now repeats the thunders of ages, and continues its slow but certain march to Erie. Time was when Niagara did not exist, and the time will come when it will cease to be!" And again: "Whether this stupendous revolution was effected by sudden or slow change, it is difficult to determine; but it is probable that causes may have combined to produce great momentary alteration, and, before or afterwards, the revolution completed by slow abrasion. It would be an unprofitable, because an unsatisfactory inquiry, to attempt fixing the time of the draining of this inland sea."

"There are many evidences on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, that since the present order of things commenced on this planet, the surface of that vast mass of water stood several hundred feet above its present level. An elevation of 90 feet would suffice to throw the Atlantic tides into Lake Champlain, and that of 140 would insulate that

part of North America enclosed by the Atlantic Ocean, the St. Lawrence, Sorrel, and Hudson Rivers. An elevation of 231 feet would force the ocean tides into Lake Ontario; and, on the opposite side of the Atlantic, would reunite the Mediterranean with the Caspian Sea and Indian Ocean, and would again join the Baltic with the Frozen Ocean, and insulate the Scandinavian peninsula." A survey of the basins above referred to will show the reasons upon which this supposition is based. It only remains to mention the quantity of water supposed to be discharged by the Canadian Sea,(or Lake Superior,) through Lake Ontario. The quantity of water contained in this basin, Darby estimates to be at least 1,547,011,729,360,000 cubic feet; and allowing the St. Lawrence to be three fourths of a mile wide, at three separate places which he designates, viz.: opposite Black Rock in the Niagara Strait, at the head of Ogden's Island, and at Point Iroquois, a few miles above it, and to flow three miles an hour, with a mean depth of 50 feet, a transverse section of the river, one foot in width, would contain 105,600 superficial feet, which multiplied by 15,840, the lineal feet contained in three miles, would yield 1,672,704,000 cubic feet as the hourly discharge.

I have neglected hitherto to mention the valley of Lake Champlain which is one of the most important confluents of the St. Lawrence, in some points of view, being the natural connection between that basin and the basin of the Hudson. It contains Lake Champlain proper, 109 miles long, from half a mile to 12 miles broad, and of prodigious depth, and Lake George; the latter lying nearly 200 feet above the former. Lake George lies in an apparent rent between the adjacent mountains, and forms with Lake Champlain a part of the great North American Glen. "The summit level between its surface and that of the Hudson has been stated to be only 140 feet. The evident ancient union between them has been restored by human labor in Champlain Canal, and only a fall of 90 feet is to be overcome to connect its bosom with the St. Lawrence tides by a canal down its outlet, the Sorrel or Chambly. Very little further labor will be necessary to complete an uninterrupted commercial connection between this beautiful valley and the two great channels of Hudson and St. Lawrence, and leave to the inhabitants of the basin the choice of marts."—*Darby.*

The head of the tides in the St. Lawrence is a remarkable point in the hydrography of North America, and demands particular notice. Where the highest ascent of the tides is attained, it is nearly on the level with the ocean, in which the tide wave originates. We may therefore consider the level of the St. Lawrence immediately below the town of Three Rivers, as that of the Atlantic Ocean. The tide passes through a chain of primitive mountains, on a breach of which stands the city of Quebec. It ascends higher in this river than in any other in the world, except the Amazon, being estimated by Darby at 432 miles.

The variety of natural scenery in the basin of St. Lawrence is very great. Many of the rivers which swell the lakes descend from 1000 or 1200 feet of elevation. The margin of Lake Superior is often broken, rugged, and precipitous; but those of Huron and Michigan rise gently from the water in many places, and valleys of rich verdure and lofty timber stretch from the water's edge. The Indian signification

of the word *Ontario* is *beautiful*, and the high transparency of the waters of these great lakes adds another charm to the scenery. "*The Thousand Isles*" of the St. Lawrence, extending from the north-eastern part of Lake Ontario 50 miles down the river, are very wild and savage in their aspect. "The placid and limpid water," says Darby, "reflects the broken rocks and the few trees and shrubs which rise amid the fissures of their fractured ruins. No human habitation appears to enliven for an instant this picture of eternal waste; but, passing this scene of silent and magnificent desolation, a fairy land seems to open. Where the Thousand Isles terminate at Brockville, the river dilates into a small bay, and further down slowly contracts; the shore on both sides, rising by a regular and gentle acclivity, exposes a landscape which for placid beauty cannot be excelled. This is the general character of the main banks until far below Montreal. Four miles below Ogdensburgh the Galloupe Islands commence, but with a physiognomy entirely distinct from the naked rocks of the Thousand Isles. The Galloupe cluster exceeds thirty in number, lying with every inclination to the general course of the river, and varying in size from 1½ miles to 20 yards in length;—almost all of an elliptical form, and rising from the water by a globular swell. In the bland air of a Canadian summer evening, the imagination can scarcely conceive any spots more delightful than those isles. On many which have been formerly cleared of timber, and again overgrown with ash, linden, wild cherry, and aspen-trees, without underwood, it is a real recreation to contemplate the enchanting prospect, the cultivated shores, the floating barks, and the majestic river whose volume is spread around.

"Proceeding downwards, a constant succession of natural objects meet the traveller's eye,—objects commensurate in their outline to the scale of the basin in which they are placed.

"Below Montreal, the country adjacent to the river becomes less elevated, and of course the scenery less bold and striking; and this character of coast continues nearly to the head of the tides at the mouth of St. Maurice; but here again the banks resume all their varied splendor of contrasted beauty, and rise on both sides to the height of Cape Diamond, on which Quebec is placed. At this capital of the province there is a most excellent port and a capacious basin, (here Darby quotes from Bouchette,) wherein the greatest depth of water is 28 fathoms, with a tide rising from 17 to 18 feet, and at the spring tides from 23 to 24 feet; from whence, and from Point Levi, on the south shore, one of the most striking panoramic views perhaps in the whole world offers itself to notice. The assemblage of objects is so grand, and though naturally, yet to appearance so artificially contrasted with each other, that they mingle surprise with the gratification of every beholder. The capital on the summit of the cape, the River St. Charles flowing for a great distance through a valley abounding in natural beauties, the Falls of Montmorenci, the Island of Orleans, and the well-cultivated settlements on all sides, form together a *coup d'œil* that might enter into competition with the most romantic.

"This grandeur in the face of nature," continues Darby, "remains undiminished, if it is not increased, below Quebec. At Rivière du Sad, 30 miles lower than the capital, the river is 11 miles wide, and the white churches, hamlets, villages, and farms, protruded on the vision by

the dark and thick woods, and the strongly defined background of lofty mountains, maintain the preëminence of landscape along the St. Lawrence.

"It is not, however, in summer alone, or in autumn, that the St. Lawrence basin can be seen to most advantage. In all the rigors of a Canadian winter, when the capacious bosoms of most of its rivers are turned into solid and glassy roads,—and in the vicinity of Quebec this change is annual,—then, the more intense and continued the frost, the more pertinaciously do the inhabitants boast of their season of business, amusement, and pleasure. If frost and snow do not altogether compensate to the Canadian for the open navigation of summer, the long and unbroken frozen surface of Lower Canada renders winter in that country preferable to the same season in the middle of the United States and the southern part of Upper Canada.

"Excessive tides prevent the St. Lawrence from ever becoming covered with compact ice below Quebec; but such are the enormous masses driven in every direction by the winds and currents, that the river is utterly unnavigable nearly half the year. It is then, amid snow and ice, that gliding vehicles supply the place of sails, oars, and wheels, and the smooth faces of the streams are transformed into most excellent roads, and the Canadian, shut from the ocean, performs his rapid journey of business or social intercourse." M.

THE SIX VERSIONS.

[From the Sunday School Journal.]

Having been much interested in examining a specimen of a work proposed by Mr. Bagster, of London, in which the six principal English versions of the Bible will be presented in parallel columns, I thought that some of your younger readers, at least, would be pleased to have an opportunity of noticing the gradual change that has taken place in our language in the last five centuries; and I therefore copy four verses of the Epistle to the Hebrews, from each version.

Wiclif's Translation. 1380.

bi feith noe dredde thoruy answere takun of these thingis that yit weren not seen, and schapid a schip in to the helthe of his hous bi wiche he dampned the world and is ordeyned eire of rightwisnesse whiche is bi feith.

bi feith, he that is clepid abraham: obeied to go out into a place whiche he schuld take in to eritage, and he wente out: not witynge whider he schulde go. by feith he dwelte in the lond of biheest: as in an alien lond: dwellynge in litil heusis with Isaac and Jacob even eiris of the same biheest, for he abode the citee havynge foundementis, whos craftiman and maker is god.

Tyndale. 1534.

By fayth Noe honored God, after that he was warned of thinges which were not sene, and prepared the arcke to the savinge of his housshold̃e, thorowe the which arcke he condempned the worlde, and became heyre of the rightewesnes which commeth by fayth.

By fayth Abraham, when he was called obeyed, to goo out into a

place, which he shold afterwarde receive to inheritaunce, and he went out not knowynge whether he shuld goo. By fayth he removed into the londe that was promysed him, as into a straunge countre, and dwelt in tabernacles; and so did Isaac, and Jacob, heyres with him of the same promes.—For he loked for a citie havinge a foundacion whose bylder and maker is God.

CRANMER. 1539.

By fayth Noe beynge warned of God, eschued the thynges whych were as yet not sene, and prepared the arcke to the savynge of hys houssholde, thorow the whych arcke, he condempned the worlde, and became heyre of the rightewesnes whych is acording to fayth. By fayth Abraham, when he was called obeyed, to go out into a place, whych he shuld afterwarde receaue to inheritaunce: and he went out, not knowing whether he shuld go. By faith he remoued into the lande of promes, as into a straunge countre, when he had dwelt in tabernacles: and so dyd Isaac and Jacob heyres with hym of the same promes. For he looked for a cytie hauing a foundacion, whose buylder and maker is God.

GENEVAN. 1557.

By faith Noe being warned of God, of the thinges which were as yet not sene, moved with reverence prepared the arcke to the savying of his housholde, through the which arcke he condemned the worlde, and was made heyre of the rightuousnes which commeth by faith.

By faith Abraham when he was called obeyed *God*, to go out into a place, which he should afterward receave for inherytance: and he went out, not knowing whether he should go. By faith he abode in the lande, that was promised him, as in a strange countre, as one that dwelt in tabernacles, and with Isaac and Jacob heyres with him of the some promis:—For he loked for a citie havyng a foundation, whose buylder and maker is God.

RHEIMS. 1582.

By faith Noe having received an answer concerning those things which as yet were not seen, fearing, framed the arke for the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world: and was instituted heire of the justice which is by faith.

By faith, he that is called Abraham obeid to go forth into the place which he was to receive for inheritance: and he went forth, not knowing whither he went. By faith he abode in the land of promise, as in a strange land, dwelling in cottages with Isaac and Jacob the coheires of the same promise. For he expected the citie that hath foundations: whose artificer and maker is God.

KING JAMES. 1611.

By faith Noah being warned of God of things not seene as yet, moved with feare, prepared an arke to the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world: and became heire of the righteousness which is by faith.

By faith Abraham when he was called to goe out in a place which hee should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and he went out not knowing whither he went.

By faith hee sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange coun-

trey, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heires with him of the same promise.

For he looked for a citie which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

This last is our present version, but there has been some change in orthography since it was first printed. I add in the same order two well-known verses from the same Epistle, as the variety of expressions may serve to show the fulness of the original meaning: —

But feith is the substaunce of thingis that ben to be hopid, and an argument of thingis not aperynge, and in this feith eeld men han getun witnessinge.

Fayth is a sure confydence of thynges, which are hoped for, and a certayntie of thynges which are not sene. By it the elders were well reported of.

Fayth is a sure confydence of thynges, whych are hoped for, and a certayntie of thynges which are not seen. For by it the elders obtayned a good reporte.

Fayth is that which causeth those things to appeare indeed which are hoped for, and sheweth evidently the thinges which are not sene. For by it our elders were wel reported of.

And fayth is the substance of things to be hoped for, the argument of things not appearing. For in this the old men obtained testimonie.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report.

PROMPTITUDE AND PUNCTUALITY.

BY DR. HUMPHREY.

You will observe some children, in families where you visit, if not in your own, that are never ready to go at the first bidding. They must be requested or commanded to do some little thing, twice, perhaps three or four times, before they can be induced to move. They do not mean to break the fifth commandment; but, on the contrary, to honor and obey their parents, in all things. They are not quite ready, however, and they are sure it makes no difference, whether they go this minute or the next. They want to read to the next paragraph, or to hear a story through, or to warm themselves a little longer, or to be indulged in some other equally frivolous excuse for lingering. Now, this is a very bad habit, which ought never to be winked at, and which, indeed, is never formed, but under mistaken parental indulgence. If your child does not hear and obey you the first time, how can you be sure that he will the second, or even the third, unless the loud and altered tone of your voice should convince him that you are quite out of patience, and that it will not do to linger any longer? How often do children, when they have no thought of disobeying, wait till a *chore* is forgotten, or the parent is obliged to do it himself! of which, however, he has no right to complain, as it is his own fault. But the injury to *them* is very great, in thus early allowing them to form habits of procrastination, which they will be very apt to carry along with them

through life, and which, I need not say, will be extremely inconvenient both to themselves and their friends. "Samuel, my son, such a thing is wanted; will you attend to it?" "Yes, sir,"—and then reads on. "Samuel, did you hear me? The fire is getting low, or your mother wants your assistance." Still the boy is not *quite* ready to start. Then *start* him, and in such a way that he will not hereafter mistake the *tenses;* and he will thank you for it as long as you live.

So, when you send your children upon errands, or permit them to visit their little playmates, and fix the hour for their return, 'tis vastly important that you strenuously insist upon punctuality; not because their time is so valuable, for it may be worth very little or nothing to you after they come back. But, aside from your own convenience, in knowing that the errand is done, and where your children are when out of your sight, the habit of adhering to the letter of your instructions is so essential to their future usefulness and well-being, that parental laxity on this point may be followed, and I have no doubt often is, by irreparable losses of property, if not of character. The child may plead that he was urged to overstay his time, or to go off somewhere else to play, and that he was sure you would have given him leave, had you been there; and it may all be very true; but beware how you listen to such excuses. They go to sap the foundation of your authority, at the same time that he is forming a habit so mischievous to himself.

"It is certainly within the power of a sensible and well-educated mother, to inspire, during the first seven or eight years of a son's life, such tastes and dispositions as shall nearly decide the destiny of the future man; and this is done, not only by the intentional exertions of the mother, but by the gradual and insensible imitation of the child; for there is something extremely contagious in greatness and rectitude of thinking even at that age; and the character of the mother with whom he passes his early infancy, is always an event of the utmost importance to the child."

FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION.

(Continued from page 240.)

PRINCIPLES ON WHICH SCHOOLS HAVE BEEN SUPPORTED IN MASSACHUSETTS, SINCE 1647.

On inspecting the laws of the Commonwealth, which provide for public instruction, two grand features stand conspicuously forth, viz.: that the benefits of a Common School education shall be brought within the reach of every child in the State, however poor; and that the property of the State shall support a system of schools adequate to confer this universal education. These provisions are fundamental and organic. They have been in existence from the very infancy of the colony,—a period of about two centuries,—during all which time, the statute book furnishes no instance of their repeal or modification. The mode of administration has been changed, but not the original

basis of the system. The principles have reigned supreme, throughout, that the property of the citizens, whether it represented children or not, should support the schools; and that all children, whether they represented property or not, should possess the means of education.

In regard to the mode of administration, it was not until the year 1789 that the present district system had any legal existence. Between 1768 and 1789, "precincts" or parishes, (which were then territorial,) were allowed to maintain schools, by a tax upon the parishioners; but, previous to 1768, the schools were sustained by towns acting in their municipal capacity. The law of 1789 recites, that, "whereas, by means of the dispersed situation" of the inhabitants of some towns, "the children and youth cannot be collected in any one place for their instruction," it had become expedient to divide the territory of the towns into separate districts; and it then proceeds to empower towns "to determine and define the limits of school districts." The great majority of the towns in the State have since exercised the power which this law conferred, by a geographical division of their respective territories into school districts; so that now, with but three hundred and seven towns in the State, we probably have not less than twenty-five hundred school districts. Several towns still manage the schools in their corporate capacity, and in some districts there are two or more schools. The number of public schools in the State last year, was 3072.

Whatever advantages may be realized, or evils averted, by this change from the town to the district system, it is certain that the latter has been carried to a most injurious extent. The following is a tabular view of the winter schools, for the winter of 1839–40, classified according to the number of the scholars belonging to them respectively. It includes 2708 schools only, there being, in regard to the others, some imperfection in the returns, which renders their classification impracticable.

Schools not exceeding 10 scholars, . . .	14
From 10 to 20 " . . .	194
" 20 to 30 " . . .	426
" 30 to 40 " . . .	562
" 40 to 50 " . . .	479
" 50 to 60 " . . .	376
" 60 to 70 " . . .	251
" 70 to 80 " . . .	153
" 80 to 90 " . . .	80
" 90 to 100 " . . .	43
" 100 to 200 " . . .	110
" 200 to 500 " . . .	18
Over 500	2

The winter schools contained, in the whole, 149,222 scholars; while the summer schools, for the same school year, contained only 124,345, which is one sixth less than the winter; and therefore, on an average, the summer schools must have been one sixth smaller than the winter, as represented in the above table.

Another view of the subject establishes the same result, in regard to the too minute subdivision of our territory into school districts. The number of square miles in the area of Massachusetts is 7500, which is

less, on an average, than two and a half square miles to a school. Now, if a schoolhouse is situated in the centre of a territory of four square miles, (that is, two miles square,) none, or but few of the scholars,—such only as live in the corners of the square,—would be obliged to travel more than one mile to the school. Were the State, therefore, divided into sections, each of which would contain four square miles, it would require, to dot its surface all over, less than nineteen hundred schoolhouses, which, in parallel rows, in either direction, would not be more than two miles apart ;—or, which is the same thing, each schoolhouse would have four other schoolhouses within two miles of it. Nineteen hundred luminous points, each one shedding its beams through a radius of a little more than one mile, would cover the whole surface of the State with a flood of light. Instead of nineteen hundred, however, we have more than three thousand schools ; but the light which they dispense is in the inverse ratio of their number, for the aliment that feeds their flame is divided into portions so scanty, that many of them emit only a feeble and flickering ray. The mountainous or sandy and uninhabited portions of the State, where no schoolhouse is wanted, would be a fair offset for the cities and more populous places, where they must be more numerous, (the valuation statistics showing that more than one quarter of the entire surface of the State is unimproved, or unimprovable land ;)—making, therefore, all due allowance on this account, it is obvious that the *number* of schoolhouses in the State is fifty per cent. greater than it needs to be, to accommodate all the children within it, so far as extent of territory or distance of travel to school is concerned.

Various causes have conspired to produce this result,—some of them pardonable, some censurable, all most unfortunate. In laying off the town into districts, the committee appointed for the purpose would be solicited to make the districts small, in order to supersede the necessity of sending far to school ; so that in the original survey and location, the chances would preponderate in favor of too minute a subdivision.

During the fifty years since the enactment of the law authorizing this geographical division of the towns into districts, very many cases have occurred, where, on account of the laying out of new roads, or the opening of new places of business, the population has shifted, and a portion of territory which once contained inhabitants enough for a school, has been reduced to a small number of people, while the school and the limits of the school district have remained as they were, though the facts which justified their establishment have ceased to exist. On the other hand, where a district, which originally contained only children enough for a single school, has, by an accession to its population, outgrown the dimensions of the schoolhouse, the general course has been to divide the territory of the district, and establish two schools in two schoolhouses, instead of preserving the integrity of the district, and separating the children into older and younger classes, for different apartments in the same house.

Another cause of the dismemberment of districts cannot be too severely censured. Where local or neighborhood quarrels have arisen, from any cause, amongst the inhabitants of a school district, they have often resulted in a division of its territory. In the administration and man-

agement of a school, many points are presented concerning which even judicious and well-disposed men may honestly differ; but when hostile parties are arrayed against each other, and a contentious spirit prevails, every passing day furnishes occasions for dissension. The district being thrown into a state of civil warfare, one of the most obvious means for a separation of the combatants and the restoration of peace, is a division of the battle-field. When the passions of men are excited, their highest privileges are readily sacrificed, and this melancholy truth is not without many illustrations. Cases have occurred, where those inhabitants of a district who contested the location of a schoolhouse in a given spot, on account of its alleged distance from their homes, have prosecuted hostilities to a division of the territory, and have then erected a new house within a stone's throw of the very spot, whose remoteness from their own residences was before deemed an intolerable grievance. The more ignorant the people of a district are, and the more need they consequently have of the benefits of a school, the more likely are they to do themselves this wrong. But the consequences are fatal. The power of the district is annihilated. Suppose a district to have $90 to be expended for the wages and board of a teacher, and for fuel, during the winter school. If his wages are $20 a month, his board $8, and the fuel $2, for the same time, then the sum of $90 will sustain the school *three* months. But if a contention among the inhabitants results in a division of the district, the share of each part is reduced from $90 to $45. This sum, at the same rates, (even after the expense of erecting another schoolhouse has been incurred,) will sustain a school only a month and a half, instead of three months. But the last six weeks of a three months' school, under a good teacher, is worth more than double the first six, so that the value of the divided fund is reduced to less than a fourth part of that of the undivided. Both parties, conqueror and conquered, are alike defeated; for the prize of the contest turns to a shadow the moment it is won.

Other consequences of this evil are, that it leads to the erection of contracted, inadequate schoolhouses; it stands in the way of all outlays for necessary repairs, and of all appropriations for the purchase of furniture, apparatus, libraries, &c., and it gives a new lease of existence to all old schoolhouses, however dilapidated or miserable; for notwithstanding their acknowledged inconvenience, discomfort, and unhealthfulness, the answer, that the district is small and poor, silences all arguments in favor of a reform. Small districts, too, naturally desiring to prolong their schools disproportionately to the money they draw, are under a constant temptation to employ cheap teachers; and although it is not a universal truth, yet it is a very general one, that a *cheap* and an *incompetent* teacher are synonymous terms. Good teachers can do better elsewhere; so that the districts, which have thus crippled and enervated themselves, must, from the necessity of the case, be content with an inferior grade of teachers,—not one year only, but year after year, and during the whole stage of their children's education. Straitened and impoverished in this way, some districts have been driven to the expedient of wholly omitting the school for a year, and then of expending the allowance of two years, at once. The blessed office of the peacemaker is never more worthily exercised than in restoring a contentious school district to harmony.

Another consideration pertaining to this subject is, that there is a limit downwards as well as upwards, in regard to the number of scholars, most eligible for a school. No teacher can do justice to an ordinary district school, of more than fifty scholars, especially if they are advanced ones. If he has more, he cannot keep them occupied, nor has he time for the necessary oral instruction of the classes. Hence the law of March 19, 1839, required that a female assistant should be employed in every town or district school in the State, which contained fifty scholars on an average, unless the town or district should, at a meeting regularly called for the purpose, vote to dispense with the same. But the number of scholars may be too small as well as too great. In most branches, a large class is not only taught as easily as, but more efficiently than, a small one. Numbers are a natural stimulus to all the social faculties, and hence they incite to greater exertions. As the number of inquisitive learners is increased, more questions will be asked in regard to the lessons, and thus the subject will be presented in a greater variety of lights. All experienced teachers must have observed, that a bright scholar will suggest doubts or difficulties, which not only would never have occurred to a learned man, but would be less likely to occur to him, just in proportion to the extent of his learning. Hence the advantage of numbers in a school; and if fifty be regarded as the maximum, probably forty would be, as the minimum for a Common School; but we have more than twelve hundred below this number. The natural consequences of very small districts are poverty in the purse that supports, and in the spirit which animates them; and when these disastrous and blighting effects do not follow, it is only because the powerful tendency to such a result is counteracted by a few energetic and indefatigable men, who supply a vigor of will which sustains the activity of the system, in defiance of its natural infirmities. In fine, it is obvious, that all the strength which comes from the union and concert of numbers is lost, when a town commits the grand error of pulverizing its territory, and leaving each atom to its own resources.

Since the law of 1789, it has been optional with the towns, either to create districts and to devolve the main part of the administration of the schools upon them, or to carry on the system itself, in its corporate capacity. In a great majority of cases, the former mode has been adopted, and now prevails; nor is it probable that it will be, hereafter, to any great extent, abandoned in favor of the latter. Yet it is an undeniable fact, that the schools are best conducted when they are managed by the town, and not by districts. Under the town system, all the interested as well as the benevolent tendencies favor improvement. Each section of the town will contend for a good schoolhouse, because the town, and not the district, is to bear the expense of building it. A good schoolhouse in one section, will supply an argument, on the ground of equality, for good houses in all the others. For the same reason, each will demand all suitable and timely repairs, competent teachers, equal supervision, and all the other constituents of prosperity in a school. These are obvious causes for the incontestable fact, that the town system of administration produces the best schools; and it is a fact which ought to be understood, for although the towns in this Commonwealth may not be induced to break up the prevalent system, and

return to the former, yet the natural tendencies of the two systems ought to be known in those States which are just entering upon a plan of public instruction, and, having no ancient usages to change, can begin with the best.

What, then, is the remedy for this undue multiplication of school districts? I answer, the remedy must depend upon the circumstances of each case. Where there are now two or three school districts, in a section of country not exceeding four or five square miles in area, (equal to two, or a little more than two, miles square;) or when the extreme settled parts of a section of any size, are but about one mile, or one mile and a half, from the centre of its population, the remedy is, the consolidation of the districts into one and the separation of the older from the younger scholars. If the number of children is sufficiently large, three divisions are better than two,—the first to contain the scholars below six or seven years of age, the second, those between that age and eleven, twelve, or thirteen, according to circumstances, and the third, all above. Where this has already been done, the advantages are so apparent, that no consideration could induce the united districts to revert to the old system, by a separation. Where all the small children belonging to two or three schools are brought together, the number of those of similar ages and attainments is two or three times as great. Instead of calling up the children singly, to teach them the alphabet, or to read in simple lessons, and devoting but two or three minutes to each one, as is commonly done,—all, in the same stage of advancement, may be classed together; and thus the time, so much of which is wasted in coming and going, and in beginning and ending the lessons, and all of which is substantially lost by being broken into fragments, becomes sufficient, when its scattered portions are united, for a thorough recitation, with the necessary accompaniment of oral explanations. This course would promote two great purposes, economy in time, and efficiency of instruction, and would thereby immeasurably increase both the quantity and the quality of the education which the same amount of money could be made to yield.

Another remedy, wherever applicable, is still more advantageous; and when circumstances will permit, it should always supersede the former. It consists in the establishment of

UNION SCHOOLS.

The ruinous consequences of creating small districts, having been communicated to the Board and to the Legislature, in January, 1838, led to the enactment of the law of April 25, 1838, respecting Union Schools. A more remedial and salutary law, in regard to this evil, could not have been devised. It authorizes "any two or more contiguous school districts, in this Commonwealth, to associate together and form a Union District, for the purpose of maintaining a Union School, to be kept for the benefit of the older children of such associated districts, if the inhabitants of each of such districts shall, at legal meetings called for that purpose, agree to form such union, by a vote of two thirds of the legal voters thereof;" and it gives to such Union District the powers of a body corporate.

The union system is applicable to all places, where the distance from the extremes to the centre of population is too great for the younger

children to go daily to school, but not too great for the older. In such cases, there should be separate houses, two, three, or more, where the smaller children can be taught by females, while the larger ones should be accommodated at or near the centre of the territory. Ordinarily, the existing schoolhouses and the territorial limits of the districts, as now laid out, will answer the first purpose, while for the Union School some further provision will be necessary. The advantages of the Union School may be briefly stated under the following heads:—1. Economy of the plan. 2. Management and Discipline.

1. Economy of the Plan. In the first place, the plan of Union Districts commends itself, on the score of economy, to every man, who desires to make a given amount of money accomplish more good; or to derive an equal amount of good from less money. In my Report on Schoolhouses, pp. 30, 31, it is arithmetically proved, that, where four districts can be united for this purpose, a given sum of money, which now sustains four summer schools taught by females, and four winter schools taught by males, only four months each, would, under the proposed arrangement, maintain the four summer schools, six months each, and a winter school, eight months, instead of four, would give the master $35 a month instead of $25, and would still leave in the treasury an unexpended balance of $20. The demonstration, as to the economy of the plan, being there wrought out, and open to the inspection of any one who will examine it, I leave this topic, with a single statement, illustrative of the necessity of adopting some immediate and efficient remedy. In my circuit, last autumn, through a part of the State which I had not visited before, I saw six schoolhouses all situated on the same road, the extreme ones of which were but a mile and a half apart, and of course only three fourths of a mile from a central point. In these, the uniform practice had been to employ six females in summer, and six males in winter. And thus, as it regards the winter schools, the wages and board of six men had been paid, and fuel for six fires provided, when one male principal, who might have received, and been worthy of the most liberal salary,—with suitable female assistants, if necessary,—might have accomplished ten times the good, at a greatly reduced expense. All this was acknowledged as soon as pointed out, and assurances of a change gratefully given. How great would be the gain, if the spirit of economy, which is often so active at the town meeting when the money for schools is granted, could be transferred to its expenditure, by a wiser mode of appropriation!

2. Management and Discipline. A more trying situation to a person of judgment and good feelings cannot well be conceived, than that of having the sole charge of a school of sixty, seventy, or eighty scholars, of all ages, where he is equally exposed to censure for the indulgences that endanger good order, and for the discipline that enforces it. One of the inquiries contained in the circular letter to the school committees, in 1838, was respecting the ages of the children attending our public schools. By the answers, it appeared, that in very many places the schools were attended by scholars of all ages, between four years and twenty; and, in some places, by those between two years and a half and twenty-five;—and thus the general regulations of the school, as to order, stillness, and the observance of a code of fixed laws, were the same for infants but just out of their cradles, and

for men who had been enrolled seven years in the militia. Now, nothing can be more obvious, than that the kind of government, appropriate and even indispensable, for one portion of these scholars, was flagrantly unsuitable for the other. The larger scholars, with a liberal recess, can keep their seats, and apply their minds for three consecutive hours. But to make small children sit both dumb and motionless, for three successive hours, with the exception of a brief recess and two short lessons, is an infraction of every law which the Creator has impressed upon both body and mind. There is but one motive by which this violence to every prompting of nature can be committed, and that is, an overwhelming, stupefying sense of fear. If the world were offered to these children as a reward for this prolonged silence and inaction, they would spurn it; the deep instinct of self-preservation alone is sufficient for the purpose. The irreparable injury of making a child sit straight, and silent, and motionless, for three continuous hours, with only two or three brief respites, cannot be conceived. Its effect upon the body is to inflict severe pain, to impair health, to check the free circulations in the system,—all which leads to dwarfishness;—and to misdirect the action of the vital organs, which leads to deformity. In regard to the intellect, it suppresses the activity of every faculty; and, as it is a universal law in regard to them all, that they acquire strength by exercise, and lose tone and vigor by inaction, the inevitable consequence is, both to diminish the number of things they will be competent to do, and to disable them from doing this limited number so well as they otherwise might. In regard to the temper and morals, the results are still more deplorable. To command a child, whose mind is furnished with no occupation, to sit for a long time, silent in regard to speech, and dead in regard to motion, when every limb and organ aches for activity;—to set a child down in the midst of others, whose very presence acts upon his social nature as irresistibly as gravitation acts upon his body, and then to prohibit all recognition of, or communication with his fellows, is subjecting him to a temptation to disobedience, which it is alike physically and morally impossible he should wholly resist. What observing person, who has ever visited a school where the laws of bodily and mental activity were thus violated, has failed to see how keenly the children watch the motions of the teacher, how eagerly, the first moment when his face is turned from them, or any person or object intervenes to screen them from his view, they seize upon the occasion to whisper, laugh, chaffer, make grimaces, or do some other thing against the known laws of the school? Every clandestine act of this kind cultivates the spirit of deception, trickery, and fraud; it leads to the formation, not of an open and ingenuous, but of a dissembling, wily, secretive character. The evil is only aggravated when the teacher adopts the practice of looking out, under his eyebrows, as it is called, or of glancing at the scholars obliquely, or of wheeling suddenly round, in order to detect offenders in the act of transgression. Such a course is a practical lesson in artifice and stratagem, set by the teacher; and the consequence is, that to entrap on the one side, and elude on the other, soon becomes a matter of rivalry and competition between teacher and pupils. Probably it is within the recollection of most persons, that after the close of some school terms, both teacher and

pupils have been heard to boast,—the one, how many he had ensnared, the others, how often they had escaped;—thus presenting the spectacle of the moral guide of our youth, and the moral subjects of his charge, *boasting* of mutual circumvention and disingenuousness.

Teachers who manage schools with a due observance of those laws with which the Creator has pervaded the human system, are accustomed, when scholars have become restless and uneasy, to send them out to run, or, in some way, to take exercise, until the accumulation of muscular and nervous energy, which prompted their uneasiness, is expended. They will then return to the schoolroom to sit with composure, or to study with diligence and vigor.

I have deemed this matter of so much consequence, and have found, in some places, such inveterate, false habits and modes of thinking respecting it, that I have desired to fortify my own views, by those of gentlemen whose authority none will venture to question. Accordingly, I have obtained the opinions of some of the most eminent physicians and physiologists in the state, and have selected three from the number, to be placed in the appendix.

The remedies for these various evils are, the establishment of Union Schools, wherever the combined circumstances of territory and population will allow;—the consolidation of two or more districts into one, where the union system is impracticable; and where the population is so sparse as to prevent either of these courses, there to break in upon the routine of the school, either by confining the young children for a less number of hours, or by giving to them two recesses, each half day. The health of the body must be preserved, because it is the only medium through which the brightest intellect and the purest morals can bless the world.

If it were possible to measure or gauge the quantity and quality of instruction which the teacher could give, under the union system, compared with that which he can give in a school composed of scholars of all ages and in all stages of advancement, no further proof in favor of a classification of the children into divisions of older and younger, would be needed. A teacher well versed in the better modes of instruction, which are beginning to be adopted, will, in most branches, teach each one of a class of twenty, more, in the same time, than he could teach any one individual of the same class. What an accession to his usefulness, that is, to the improvement of the children, would thus be gained! And is it not an unpardonable waste of means, where it can possibly be avoided, to employ a man at $25 or $30 a month, to teach the alphabet, when it can be done much better, at half price, by a female teacher?

The Union School is found to improve all the schools in the constituent districts. The children in the lower schools look upward to the higher with ambition, and labor more earnestly, that they may be prepared to enter it. So far as my knowledge extends, no districts which have adopted, could be induced to abandon it.

(To be continued.)

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